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## **The secret Nabih**

By Tariq Alhomayed

The speaker of the Lebanese parliament Nabih Berri asked in Iran: “Where is the official Arab boycott of Israel instead of Syria? Why are Arab media efforts focused on increasing tension in Syria instead of exposing the crimes of the Israeli occupation?” He went on to say “Is it because Syria, like Iran, is part of the [policy of] resistance and rejection?”

Perhaps these words are “understandable”, if not acceptable, because of the fact Berri was speaking from Iran. However, what Berri has neglected, when saying that the al-Assad regime along with Iran represent the resistance and opposition, and other false slogans, is that Bashar al-Assad’s security men, not the Israelis, are responsible for killing the Syrians today. It seems that Berri did not realize, on the day of his statement in Tehran, the comments from the spokesman of the Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy in the Iranian Shura Council, Kazem Jalali. Jalali said that the disputed islands occupied by Iran, but claimed by the UAE, are “Iranian islands and will remain [ours] forever. We will cut off any hand that infringes upon them”!

If Berri opposes the Israeli occupier, then what about the Iranian occupier? If Berri rejects the Israeli suppression of the Palestinians, then what about al-Assad’s suppression of the Syrians? What about what Tehran is doing in Iraq? What about Tehran receiving [members from] the Taliban? But what about what Nabih Berri said himself, or what the “secret” Nabih said, about Hezbollah to the then U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, revealed by the “Wikileaks” documents? What about what Berri also said about Bashar al-Assad, whom he defends today in Iran, in those documents?

“Wikileaks” posted a classified US document in which Nabih Berri claimed that the 2006 war launched by Israel against Lebanon constituted a chance to direct a severe blow to Hezbollah in Lebanon, an ally of the al-Assad regime in Syria. The leaked cable quoted the former U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon, Jeffrey Feltman, saying that Berri acknowledged that a successful Israeli military operation would be a good opportunity to destroy Hezbollah’s military and political aspirations. During their meeting, Berri went on to describe Israeli strikes on Hezbollah by saying “It’s like honey. A little bit is good, but if you eat the whole jar you get sick”. Mr. Berri then “then threw his head back in riotous laughter”, according to the leaked cable. Berri was also quoted as saying that it was now difficult for him to sit with Hassan Nasrallah, because he had misled him after promising a quiet summer in Lebanon, after which elements of Hezbollah began to kidnap Israeli soldiers. Thus, Berri explained in the document that “we can never sit down at the table with him [Nasrallah] again. We think he lied to us”.

This is not all; another “Wikileaks” document attributed statements to Berri - which his office tried to deny - criticizing Bashar al-Assad’s speech on the 15th of August 2006,

which supported Hezbollah and attacked the March 14th forces and Saudi Arabia. According to the leaked documents, Berri said with regards to the speech: "Bashar has done [sic] a mistake. It is stupid".

So, who do we believe today; Nabih Berri speaking from Tehran in defense of Iran and the al-Assad regime, or the "secret" Berri who deems Nasrallah to be a liar, and described al-Assad's speech as stupid?

I think the "secret" Nabih is more accurate than the "Iranian" Nabih.

**Tariq Alhomayed** is the Editor-in-Chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, the youngest person to be appointed that position. Mr. Alhomayed has an acclaimed and distinguished career as a Journalist and has held many key positions in the field including; Assistant Editor-in-Chief of Asharq Al-Awsat, Managing Editor of Asharq Al-Awsat in Saudi Arabia, Head of Asharq Al-Awsat Newspaper's Bureau-Jeddah, Correspondent for Al - Madina Newspaper in Washington D.C. from 1998 to Aug 2000. Mr. Alhomayed has been a guest analyst and commentator on numerous news and current affair programs including: the BBC, German TV, Al Arabiya, Al- Hurra, LBC and the acclaimed Imad Live's four-part series on terrorism and reformation in Saudi Arabia. He is also the first Journalist to conduct an interview with Osama Bin Ladin's Mother. Mr. Alhomayed holds a BA degree in Media studies from King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, and has also completed his Introductory courses towards a Master's degree from George Washington University in Washington D.C. He is based in London.

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